THE REDBIRD WORD

Volume 100 Issue 1 **Celebrating 100 years!**

Alton High School, 4200 Humbert Rd., Alton, Ill. 62002, Room B136

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ABOUT THE COVER

Junior Holland Brunaugh, Senior Andrea Hyman and Sophomore Anderson Kaufmann, among many students, begin to open their Yondr pouches to retrieve their personal belongings at the end of the school day.
Photo by Leigha Cole, Editor-In-Chief

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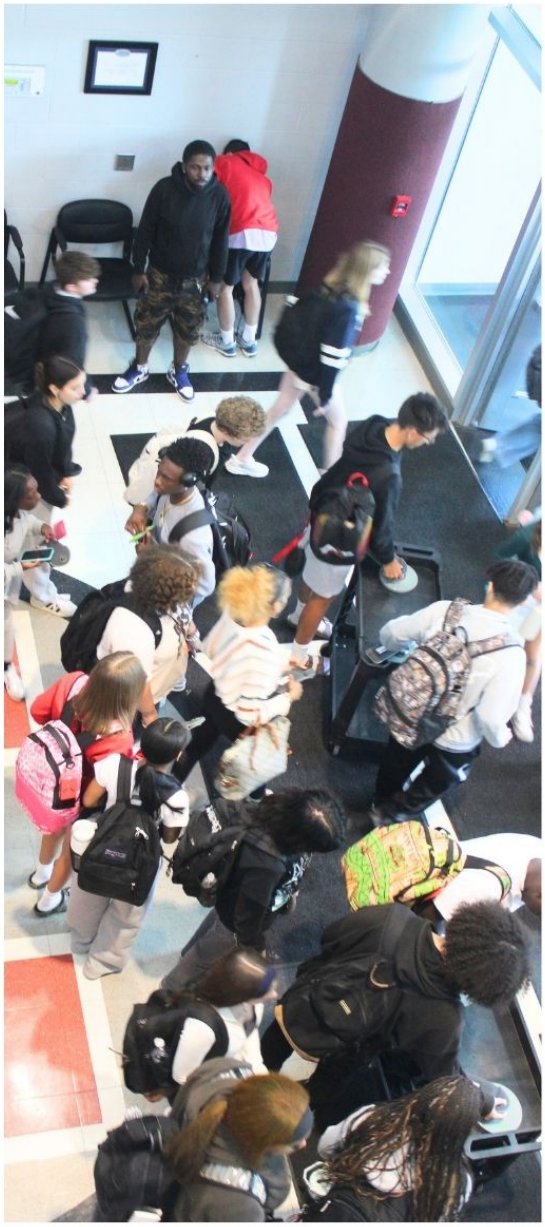


Mary Anderson, a member of the safety team, watches as students line up to unlock their Yondr pouches after dismissal.
Photos by Juliette Meza, Photo Editor

Locked Up

District Implements New Yondr Pouch Policy to Limit Cell Phone Usage

By Leigha Cole, Editor-In-Chief

On July 29, 2025, administration announced the decision to assign each student a Yondr pouch, implementing a cell-phone free school environment in order to curb classroom cell phone usage. Students are now required to place their cell phones, smart watches and any Bluetooth devices into their pouch, and lock it, upon entering the building.

Superintendent Elaine Kane expressed further expectations for the district as well as additional applications of the policy.

"Our top priority is to provide an excellent setting for students and staff. The goal of this initiative is to foster a productive, healthy and inclusive learning environment," Kane said.

Students express their dissatisfaction with this is a permanent change to the district. While students may feel discontent in the decision, some admit to being more focused during class time.

"I do my work more," senior Makenzie Cochran said, "Just in my down time I don't know what to do, so I just do my work."

Multiple documents in response to parent/student concerns have been sent out by Kane, specifically addressing complaints regarding cell phone usage during lunch and passing period.

"We understand that some parents prefer that students have access to their phones between classes and at lunch, Kane said. "However, our experience indicates that the compulsion for students to access their phones throughout the day creates an unmanageable expectation for our teachers to enforce."

Accommodations can be made for students fitting under circumstances such as medically documented authorizations. In the instance of absolute emergency, there is a Crisis Response Plan in place in partnership with local law enforcement. Should a nonspecific emergency or threat take place, contact from administration to parents will be shared via profiles connected to Skyward and/or Parent Square.

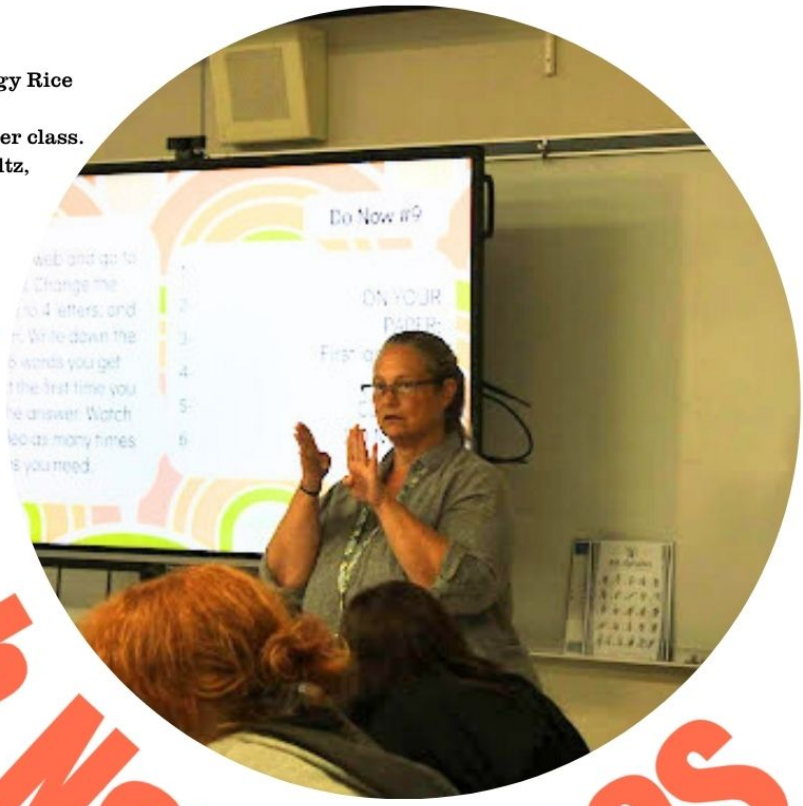
Under the circumstances of any damage or vandalization, students will be charged a fee of $30 and receive further disciplinary action.

Each pouch can be opened at the end of the school day at a designated release station by each of the building exits, but must remain closed throughout the entirety of instructional periods.

Fresh New Faces

Staff Additions Create New Possibilities for Students

By Lily Waltz, Features Editor



ASL teacher Peggy Rice introduces a new lesson to her class. Photo by Lily Waltz, Features Editor

With the school year moving swiftly along, the arrival of new teachers has brought eagerness and positivity. With new teachers in almost every department, students can expect to see fresh faces on the way to their next class.

Alton High School has seen the addition of 12 new teachers, two new assistant principals and one new guidance counselor this year. Starting his first year teaching, history teacher Thomas Unkraut said he is eager to bring a new, positive side to teaching.

"I think that as a younger teacher it makes me more approachable," Unkraut said. "I hope to bring in some new energy to the school."

As for his transition into his first year as teacher, Unkraut said he has received a multitude of guidance from his coworkers, emphasizing such a supportive work environment.

For English teacher Stephanie Hawkins, the Alton School District is nothing new. With Hawkins moving over from Alton Middle School this year, she is excited to watch her past students grow. She also serves as the assistant tennis coach for both the girls' and boys' team, seeing many familiar faces in her classroom every day.

"The transition has been great, having the kids here that I had last year and seeing former students has made it such a pleasant experience," Hawkins said. "I feel like I'm more actively involved in the student body, and getting to see the school spirit has been my favorite part so far."

Along with new teachers comes the addition of the American Sign Language class, with a multitude of students taking up the new opportunity. Taught by Peggy Rice, students can be seen communicating through their hands on the daily, while also connecting with each other.

"The idea is to layer complexity over time, and starting ASL can seem very overwhelming at first," Rice said. "I strive to create a shared experience in the classroom, as this is a new experience for me as well."

Rice has been a teacher for the deaf since 2001 with this being her first year teaching hearing students. Being deaf herself, she has had to face some adjustments, such as receiving accommodations for the first time in her career.

"For many years, I did not need to use my speech to teach so that changes everything," Rice said. "Since my students do not yet know how to sign or read signs, I explain or give directions in speech, and sign silently as well."

The addition of ASL to the language department has been deemed successful, and students can even expect to see an advanced ASL class as an option next school year. Overall, Rice said her main goal is to instill her love of ASL in her students. She hopes to create the next generation of teachers of the deaf, ASL interpreters, audiologists and speech-language pathologists.

These new additions to the Redbird community have already brought their personal experiences and passions into their classrooms. They are not just teaching a lesson, but hoping to make a mark in each student's life, both inside and outside of the classroom.

Building Futures: Students Learn Trades by Constructing a Real Home

By Juliette Meza, Photo & Art Editor

In most classrooms, students use things like desks whiteboards and computers, but in Scott Vernum's construction trades class, they use nail guns saws and other various tools. While everyone else is at school, students in his class get to go build a house in the Woodland Hills Golf Course neighborhood.

Construction trades is a class where students get to experience what it would be like to be carpenters while building the foundation and the structure of the house. Vernum said the class gives them the knowledge needed to go into trade school or straight into a job.

Students build the foundation of a house and use a skid steer loader to move dirt and debris. Photos by Scott Vernum

"A lot of students that come here don't think they can build a wall or use a nail gun, but then the next thing you know they've got one done, so it's a huge confidence boost," Vernum said. "It lets them go out into the workforce knowing that they're armed with the knowledge they need."

In the mornings, all of the students arrive to school and immediately start preparing to leave to work on the house. Once on site, they gather their tools and get straight to learning.

While practicing on an existing house, senior Logan Davis was offered a summer job from Larry & Mead.

"From there we work with professionals and that's when they offered me a job," Davis said.

During his junior year, Davis said taking welding helped him advance in construction trades this year.

"I would recommend taking a shop class," Davis said. "Woodworking, welding or architecture are good places to start."

In the first two weeks of the class, a concrete foundation on the plot of land has already been laid down with the help from local businesses.

The main companies that they work with are Tycon Builders from Alton and the concrete company Larry & Mead. These companies that are working alongside the students have been reviving the basics taught in Vernum's class.

"Paul Yost is the owner of Tycon builders," Vernum said. "Yost and our school Superintendent grew up together and still remain friends today. Together, they came up with the idea of resurrecting the construction trades class after it had been discontinued over 20 years ago."

The building process of the house has only just begun and is predicted to take about a year. Once the house sells, the school will use those resources to keep moving forward. To see their progress throughout the year, check out their Facebook page at Alton High School Construction Trades.

Working Hard

Born to Lead

All Link Crew leaders and coordinators smiling for a group photo. Photo by April Gray, Advisor

Link Crew leaders and the freshman figure out how to sit down without unlinking their arms.
Photo by April Gray, Advisor

Link crew leaders play icebreaker games with the incoming freshman on Link Crew day.
Photo by April Gray, Advisor

Link Crew Strives to Make Changes

by Garrett Stafford, Broadcast Editor

In 2023, Alton High School introduced a new program that would assist freshmen as they begin their journey through high school. During the first year the Link Crew coordinators had a rough time trying to get teachers and students aligned and have the opportunity to talk to each other during the day. Some teachers resisted the juniors and seniors from coming in and talking to the freshman they were assigned to.

"One of the big issues was communication being prompt and quick," Link Crew coordinator, and Spanish teacher, Tatiana Adams said. "Not responding is a no... we had concerns of them not trying to communicate for the rest of the year."

Over the last two years Link Crew has progressed, they have improved upon their struggles in communication between advisors and leaders as well as each interaction with their assigned freshmen.

They have improved by having leaders spend more time with one another getting to know them on a personal level.

Every year since they have started Link Crew, the communication has greatly improved between the freshmen and their leaders. Leaders have expressed how being in Link Crew has greatly improved their communication within the school building.

"In my two years in Link Crew, I have been more talkative," senior Link crew leader Janessa Bailey said. "People have said I am more approachable, and freshmen have an easier time walking up to me."

Link Crew has provided freshmen with a positive environment. This has led to more overall interaction between grade levels as well as less stress and fear going into high school. The students and their leaders interact by playing games to have meaningful conversations to help get to know one another better.

"We develop confidence and learn to lead. We start shallow and fun then it goes into deeper talks and healthy risks that you can take and if you fail you can try again," Adams said.

Bailey gave valuable advice to the freshmen about their transition to high school and how they can prepare themselves for the years ahead.

"Don't stress and don't dwell," Bailey said "It's okay to stress, you will get used to it fast, try not to be overwhelmed."

Closer Care

Southern Illinois Healthcare Foundation Opens Clinic on Campus

By Victoria Strowmatt, Copy Editor

On May 20, Southern Illinois Healthcare Foundation [SIHF] teamed up with Alton School District to open a health clinic directly on Alton High school's campus. This collaboration offers convenient and affordable medical services within the school environment. SIHF offers school sports physicals, immunizations, cold, cough, sore throat, earache, COVID/Flu Testing, behavioral health and preventive care for families and staff in the Alton School district.

The SIHF clinic is open 8:30 a.m.–3:30 p.m. on weekdays. In-person appointments are available Monday and Tuesday. Telehealth is available Wednesday through Friday. Telehealth can be available through phone call or video chat.

Family nurse practitioner, Stephanie Smith and registered medical assistant Melissa Mullins, work alongside each other to treat patients. Smith is able to provide primary care to patients of all ages. She can treat illnesses, order tests and even prescribe medication. Mullins is can perform basic patient care duties like taking vitals, managing appointments and records.

"The nurse practitioner[Smith] is only here on Monday and Tuesday," school nurse Margaret Wonders said. "But there is Melissa Mullins, she's a medical technician
She's there on those other days and she can still do things like throat swabs and COVID tests."

Parents and students have the option to get a personal consent form from the school nurses. Students with required health exams on file for their school year will be sent a form and a reminder of the required health exams at a later date.

"Then we obtain the paperwork, copy it, and we send copies down to the clinic [SIHF]. Students would still come here to check in with us," Wonders said. "If your reason for visiting was something that needed to be seen by the nurse practitioner, then we could send them down to the clinic."

For example, freshmen who have not had their physical exam on file will be reminded of the required date. Not only that but students will be sent home with a parental consent form for SIHF.

For example, freshmen who have not had their physical exam on file will be reminded of the required date. Not only that but students will be sent home with a parental consent form for SIHF.

All students entering twelve grade are required to show proof of having received at least one dose of the MCV4 (meningococcal) vaccine on or after their sixteenth birthday. Students without proof of the vaccination will be subject to exclusion on Oct. 1.

SIHF accepts any insurance and patients are not required to have insurance to sign up. Parents will be contacted before their students can visit the clinic. You can call the clinic at 618-208-8574 to schedule an appointment, or talk to any of the school nurses about getting services.

Southern Illinois Healthcare Foundation opens a new location left of Alton High School building, This clinic open for Alton school district families, staff and as well as the general public.
Photo by Victoria Strowmatt, Copy Editor

Junior Varsity and freshman football teams scrimmage against each other during Fall Kickoff.
Photo by Juliette Meza, Photo Editor

ALL IN

Fall Sports Kickoff Showcases Fall Athletes

By Heaven Everage & Kyridas Orr, Sports Editors

Redbird pride was on full display at Piasa Motor Fuels Stadium on Thursday, Aug. 21 as athletes, performers, and fans came together for Alton High School's annual Red-Grey Scrimmage, an exciting night celebrating the kickoff of fall sports.

Each team took the field, court, or track to show off weeks of preparation, hoping to set the tone for a successful season. The energy was high from the start, with student-athletes and performers eager to begin their seasons in front of the crowd.

Fall sports began long before the school year with athletes attending summer workouts, team camps and practices. For the volleyball team, that meant hours of practicing and learning how to work in sync as a team.

Head Football Coach Cody Markle instructs varsity players during a practice.
Photo by Darian Johnson

"We were getting used to playing with one another and learning our strengths as a team," senior Lucile Lehmann, head volleyball captain, said.

During the Red-Grey Scrimmage, the volleyball team showcased their progress demonstrating strong teamwork and communication.

"Our scrimmage was amazing," Lehmann said. "We played as a team and communicated our way through the game."

The Marching 100 spent long summer days preparing for the season with 10- to 11-hour practices from late July to early August.

Freshmen girls volleyball players transition between spots during red vs grey scrimmage.
Photo by Addison Strowmatt

Freshmen girls volleyball players pass the ball over the net into varsity courts.
Photo by Addison Strowmatt

Senior Oren Asher, a four-year band member, reflected on the effort that went into their performance.

"Normally, when we are preparing for a show, our practices consist of the songs we will do while performing," Asher said.

The band performed two songs at the kick off including the fan-favorite fight song.

"We performed very well. Out of the two songs we played, I feel like we performed the fight song the best," Asher said.

As the fall semester picks up, the Marching 100 is shifting their energy to support football season just as the Redbird football team hits the field.

Junior Reagan Olney, 20, watches for the next serve from the freshmen court during red vs grey scrimmage.
Photo by Addison Strowmatt

ALTON

Varsity Freshman Cheerleader Charlotte Hall hits a stunt during the Fall Sports Kickoff.
Photo by Addison Strowmatt

Their presence added to the atmosphere during the night.

"Preparation was intense, and the players worked hard to [prepare]," assistant football coach Brian Byrd said. "As our JV prepared for the fall kickoff, our varsity prepared to take on SWC rival Granite City in our Week 0 scrimmage."

Despite the heat and intensity of summer training, the team exhibited strong moments.

"While we showed flashes of great play, ultimately we were hammered with penalties that erased our successes," Byrd said.

The dance team opened the football scrimmage with a high-energy performance on the track, a result of months of hard work and summer training.

"We practiced a lot over the summer," senior Tiffany Zheng said. "During practice, we would run through the dance several times, run to build our stamina and work out our abs to ensure our ability to do our tricks."

The team's dedication was e evident in their confident performance.

"I think our team did really well considering it was our first performance. We got a lot of compliments, and I think everyone went all out," Zheng said.

The cheer team kept the crowd energized throughout the night with stunts, chants and high energy. Although their performance was spirited, they knew there was room to grow.

"We had fun and kept the crowd hype, but could've done better," senior Naeem West said. "Our coach gave us six laps at practice for receiving infractions, like not being focused on the sidelines."

Despite the setbacks, the team is optimistic about the season ahead. "Last year didn't end how we wanted, so this year we're coming back harder than ever," West said.

Earlier that day, the girls' tennis team hosted their own red versus grey scrimmage. Balancing media day and match preparation, the players stayed focused as they took the court.

"My team had a lot to do that day with media pictures and our own Scrimmage," senior Anna Larson said. "So we brought all of our things and got prepared to play and be out in the audience."

The match was competitive, with strong efforts from both sides.

"Each side played very well and was excited," Larson said. "However, the grey team won the scrimmage."

The Fall Sports Kickoff brought every team and performer together, highlighting their hard work and determination. With talent, focus and Redbird pride, Alton is ready for an exciting fall sports season.

JV Soccer Players Chris Rayfield and Nicholas Murray chase Varsity Soccer Player Luke Gallivan as he runs towards their goal.
Photo by Juliette Meza, Photo Editor

Senior Varsity Dance Team member Olivia Malenic waves to the crowd during team announcements.
Photo by Juliette Meza, Photo Editor

Freshman JV Tennis Player Charlie Lynn serves the tennis ball during the tennis red vs gray scrimmage.
Photo by Ashton Ramage

Leading Peers

Student Council Expands with Advisory Representative Elections

By Lydia Copeland, Social Media Manager

This year, Student Council will be inducting student representatives from each advisory class, giving each nominee the opportunity to speak and vote on behalf of their entire advisory class.

Elections will began on Aug. 25. After listening to a short presentation on Student Council given by their advisory teacher, students will be given the opportunity to express interest in being a representative. In the instance that multiple students volunteered, a short election was held.

"I wanted to volunteer because I feel I get along well with the peers in my advisory and I know how to talk to everyone in a beneficial way," sophomore representative Pilar Gardner said.

The main goal of this change is to receive feedback from a larger portion of the student body. Librarian and Student Council advisor, Fiona Griswold, said she felt as though they could not call themselves a student government organization without an election process based in the student body itself.

"We've reframed Student Council this year to where we have pillars, leadership, service, voice and engagement," Student Council advisor Kristi Doering said. "We want to make sure we are hearing everyone's voice in the entire school."

Student Council will now be holding bi-monthly meetings during the advisory period rather than their weekly lunch period meetings. This will allow for the entirety of the organization to get together at once rather than being split into the three different lunch periods. This change also allows for an administrative representative to begin to attend meetings.

"This was something that admin really supported, and they have also made a commitment that they will attend at least one of the monthly meetings," Griswold said.

Throughout the Coronavirus pandemic, many aspects of Student Council were restricted. Membershiphad to be limited to a small portion of the student body due to these restrictions. Doering said she believes that this led to a lack of implementation of diverse perspective from students.

"When we were more of a voluntary organization, we certainly got lots of great students involved, but I think sometimes over the years there have been discussions under the radar that maybe we don't represent all students' interests," Griswold said. "By giving advisories their own representatives, we're hoping to get more diverse perspectives."

Advisory representatives will be required to attend meetings on the first and third Thursday of every month during the advisory period. Their first responsibility was to receive feedback on Homecoming theme and Spirit Week ideas.

Advisory teacher Cody Markle gives a presentation to students on Student Council representative elections.
Photo by Lydia Copeland, Social Media Manager

Editorial

Remote High School Programs Offer a Safety Belt to Struggling Adolescents

By Leigha Cole, Editor-In-Chief

In recent years, high schoolers and their guardians have increasingly chosen to take their education from the classroom to the internet. With a constant rotation in staff and arguably harsh schedule requirements, it can become difficult for teens to adapt to unfamiliar changes and thrive in the classroom environment. Online high school programs are a viable alternative for students facing the challenges of a traditional high school.

Students can take advantage of their connection to the internet through online instruction. Studies done by the Pew Research Center show that nearly 95% of teens have access to a smartphone and at least 45% are online "almost constantly." Technological advancements are inevitable, and even irreversible, as schools and students continue to welcome the usage of instructional websites such as Khan Academy, Duolingo, NoRedInk and even StudySync. Students familiarity with these online platforms increase their chances of being successful with educational programs that are entirely online.

Moving to online courses can allow teens to professionally and personally attend to their mental health needs that are often neglected in a traditional high school setting by allowing them to create schedules of their own and learn at their own pace. Even prior to the Coronavirus pandemic, society saw a spike in high school drop-out rates and even suicide rates relating to poor mental health. Research from the National Center for Health Statistics proves that suicide rates had tripled from 2007 to 2018 for people ages 10-14, and by 57% from 2009 to 2017 for people ages 15-19. Balancing a traditional school environment - academic and social stress - can be overwhelming on top of outside responsibilities. With online courses, teens are able to make personal decisions and seek help from available support systems without becoming overwhelmed.

Such a rise in mental health challenges illuminates the importance of creating flexible educational environments for young adults to navigate today. Caring for siblings, managing employment or illness, creates a more strict and unforgiving schedule for students already struggling with a workload from school. Online programs give students the opportunity to work for themselves and begin to rely on a support system of their own. Schedules for online academics are built entirely on each individual's own personal needs, in turn making such a general education attainable to almost any given situation.

Along with each students' general struggle to balance between a lack of staff, students are left with a noticeable shortage of support from their own school system. Another study, done by the American School Counselor Association, claims that one to five students do not have access to a counselor in their school at all. The missing personal connection between staff and student creates a misunderstanding of individualized learning differences. Commonly misdiagnosed students are left to work off of instructional examples that may not cater to their individual learning needs, which they could be better fulfilled at home.

The alternative of online education doesn't lower the standards or expectations of student performance, but meets them where they are and puts them where they need to be. Although there may be a lack of social and collaborative opportunities, outside responsibilities and healthy usage of free time allows students to be apart of communities on their own will. Online high school programs should be as well-respected as a conventional high school classroom would be.

Check out our digital content!

Steps

District Improvement Plan Lists Changes To Come

By Kolten Clore, Web Editor

Each year the district evolves the "District Improvement Plan". The plan is a list of upcoming changes, and school-wide goals created by District Leadership Team Members and District Improvement Committee members. and now a group of community members, and the new student advisory representatives.

There are three different goals listed on the plan, along with an in-depth description and explanation of the changes relating to the goals. Each of these goals have five different strategies relating to the improvements at hand. Most changes being implemented throughout the school year are coming from, or will be added to, the list as time goes on, as it is constantly changing and adapting. As an example, the new Student Advisory Committee is on the list under goal one, which is to "Create a Culture of Belonging through Dignity."

The other two goals are as follows, goal two being "Grade Appropriate Instruction and Assignments" and goal three being "Effective PLC's That Drive Results" both goals have effects on the education of students and the awareness of the parents for what their students are doing, and how it's being done, for example.

Goal three relates to teachers sharing information with each other on their subjects which can allow for a more balanced and equal education across different classes as teachers do not all teach the same way.

District Improvement Plan

Goal Metrics and Aspects

Goal 1	Goal 2	Goal 3
% of students attending school every day of the week	of students scoring 80%+ on a common standard-aligned assessment	% of students passing all classes
% of families receiving communication updates via ParentSquare	% of ROPs by building	% growth in student mastery across time on benchmark and/or unit assessments
% reduction in off-track students over time	% of walkthroughs completed by building, by subject	Increase Graduation Rate by 5% (73% → 78%)
Staff attendance rate	% of classrooms visited each month	Increase Freshmen On Track by 5% (73% → 78%)
Staff 5 Essentials data	% of teachers attending PD sessions	% of fourth through twelfth grade students passing all classes.

to Success

"They [the three goals] really resonate not just with our administrative team, but also our staff and also our students," Superintendent Elaine Kane said. "And then this year we are assembling a broader group of community members to give input on those three priorities."

Gaining access to a copy of the plan is possible in a few ways, people can find it on the district website, or email an administrator with access to it.

Though these methods may be difficult as some students believe it is difficult to find online.

"I believe that we should be able to easily find out about the district improvement plan and see what is on it." junior, WIlliam Davitz said.

The district improvement plan includes all of the future changes to the school district as a whole, both parents and students alike can have access to it.

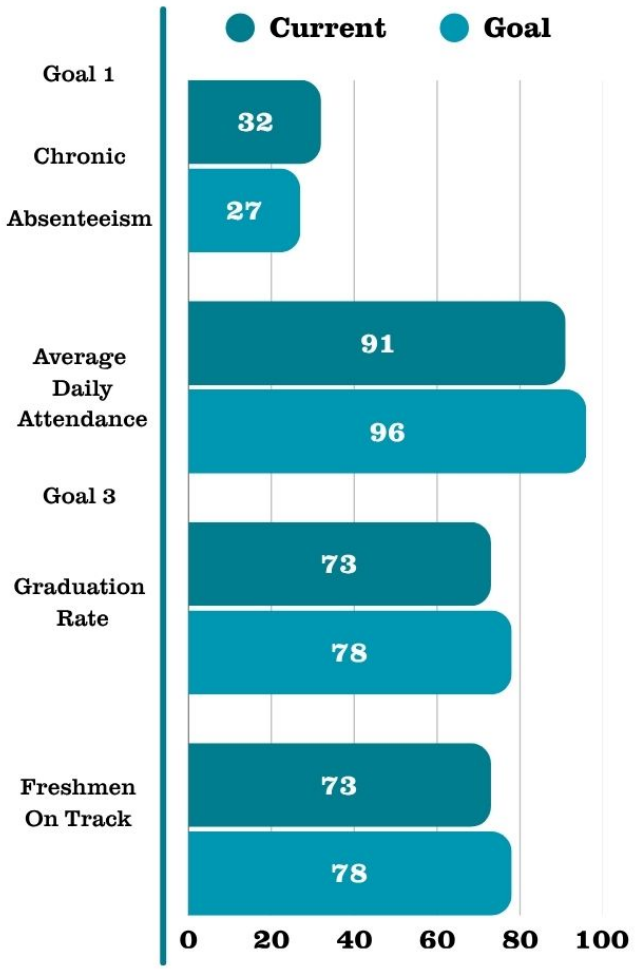
Though the plan hasn't included changes like the yondr pouches, as those are exclusive to the high school and middle school, the list still influences the school and its future.

Various statistics are on it, such as the reduction of chronic absenteeism to 27% from 32%, and the average increase of daily attendance from 91% to 96%.

Student and community voices are becoming a new part of the district improvement plan. on Sept 30 taking place 6-8 p.m. at Alton High School

4200 Humbert Road, Alton Il. The Alton School District is gathering all families, staff, and community members to be a part of the new "Reimagine Alton" initiative, which is an initiative to increase community participation and involvement within the district improvement plans creation through workshopping involving community.

"This year, we have more student voices...," Kane said. "I bet you're seeing that here at the high school, which is exciting. The other layer that we are adding this year is that we've assembled a group of 25 community members, some are parents, some are business owners, and clergy."



THE LOADING DOCK
ON THE RIVER
GRAFTON - ILLINOIS

Wired to Learn

New Electricity Class Helps Lead Students To Success

By Raye Holmes, Social Media Manager

Alton High has introduced a new class this year called the fund of electricity. The new class aims to help students build skills to lead them into a career.

The class mainly focuses on circuit board wiring and electronics to give students a better understanding of newer technology as most things use circuit boards now.

"Students will do the basic electronics underneath the laws of electricity and then they will work towards learning computer electronics, circuit board electronics," CTE Department Head, Patrick Goetten, said. "Students even learn about residential wiring."

Some CTE classes even provide students the chance to earn a certificate for the field in which they are learning. On the other hand, the class itself is not enough to certify a student. To earn a certificate in these classes, the student would have to be willing to put in further efforts.

"The key to a certificate is that you have to get 60 hours working in industry or business," Goetten said. "So once students take these classes, it's going to open them up to work in their field. They are going to have their qualifications and then get their time in, even if it is an internship or if it is actually getting a job."

With the class being brand new, there is no sure way to tell how it has impacted students' futures so far. Yet it is still designed to set them up for success if they choose to continue on to be an electrician or even follow an engineering path.

"I've always gravitated towards engineering in a way, and this class is a great ticket towards engineering," junior John Pryor said. Students will continue to learn the laws of electricity as the school year progresses.

Senior Max Reedy reading instructions on how to solder his wires to the circuit board.

Senior Logan Conrad working on wiring and soldering his circuit boards together.

Senior Brayden Buchanan working on wiring power supplies before soldering it down.

Senior Logan Hickman working on a soldering a power supply for a robot they are going to be building later on in the school year.

Photos by Jim Witt

Voices Rise

The Art of Arguing: Alton High Welcomes First Debate Team

By Stella Cowan, Copy Editor

Allyson Moulton, center, analyzes a novel with her third hour English class.
Photo by Stella Cowan, Copy Editor

Contrary to popular belief, debate is not only the explosive voices and flushed faces of a heated argument—it's the act of presenting opposing sides of a conflict or opinion. And this year Alton High is introducing it competitively.

English Department Division Chair, Matthew Sautman, has debate experience from his own high school days.

"...One thing that many people in the community perceive as arguments are shouting or winning, as opposed to 'here's my evidence, here's my case, let me engage with what you're saying,'" Sautman said. "So much of debate is really about being able to present a strong case, being able to engage with other students and to kind of challenge you to think more critically and be more persuasive as a public speaker."

Alton has long offered a discussion and debate class, previously taught by Kristi Doering. This year, however, will be its first shot at a competitive team.

Both the team and the class will be run by English teacher Allyson Moulton, who is beginning her second year. Moulton has extensive experience with debate, a factor that played heavily into the addition of a team for Alton.

While specific dates involving the beginning of the debate season have not yet been released, typical schedules begin in mid-to-late September and run through early spring.

Debate teams will be given opposing viewpoints on a shared topic or issue. Then, using reason and evidence, they will attempt to convince a judge to side with their viewpoint within a set time limit.

Reese Hafertepe, a senior in the discussion and debate class, expressed her concern over a lack of enrollment.

"I think the main challenge facing the debate team is interest," Hafertepe said.

Many students and staff members are excited about the team, but spreading awareness of its existence has proven to be a challenge. Sautman predicts that Moulton will need to recruit students from outside the debate class to participate in the team.

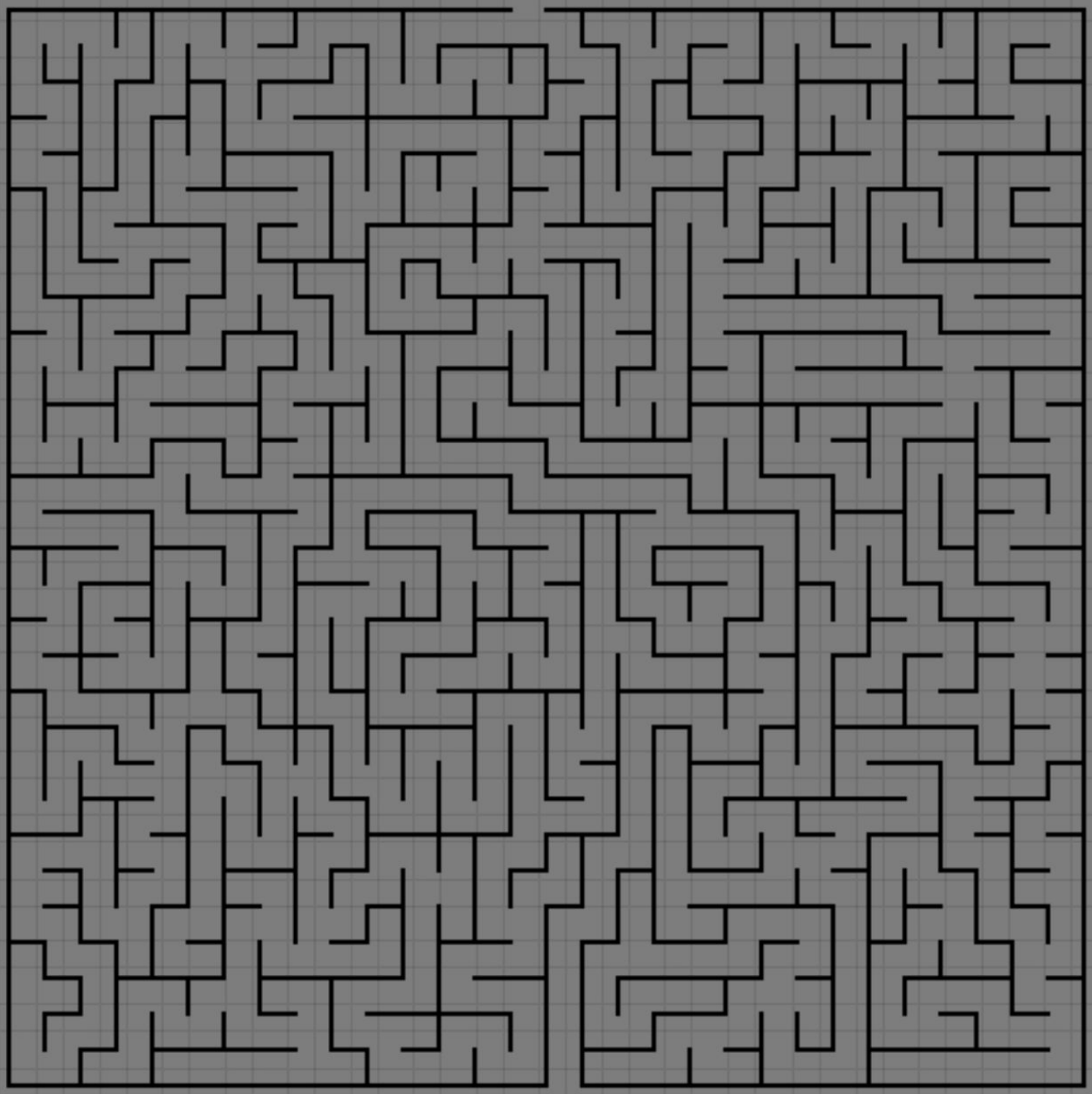
"I suspect the first year is going to be smaller," Sautman said, "But I hope that it can eventually build up large enough that we can be able to give this experience where students are able not just to gain these skills, but to build this community."

Sautman recalled how joining debate helped him polish his speaking abilities and gain confidence in a controlled environment. Any students interested in learning these skills—or learning how to effectively argue a point—are encouraged to contact Moulton about participating in debate.

Social and Ethical Issues, Technology and Science, Educational Policies, etc.

What's the fastest way to unlock the Yondr pouch?

Start



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